

DATA BUFFER-CONTROLLED DIGITAL CLOCK REGENERATOR

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates in general to communication systems and subsystems therefor, and is particularly directed to a clock regeneration scheme for a digital communication receiver. The clock regeneration scheme employs a fixed fractional delay line that is driven by a received data clock, to provide a plurality of respectively offset phase delayed versions of the received clock. One of the phase delayed versions of the received clock is used as the regenerated clock. A data buffer-based control loop is controllably stepped through outputs of the fixed fractional delay line, to controllably cause effective frequency of the regenerated clock to track the effective frequency of a valid data signal.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] In order to successfully coherently recover data from a received digital communication signal, digital communication receivers employ some form of clock recovery mechanism that operates on the received signal to regenerate the embedded clock signal. As diagrammatically illustrated in Figure 1, the clock and data transport path often include a first-in, first-out (FIFO) buffer 10, which receives a serial data stream 11 that is synchronous with an incoming clock signal 12. Because the data is not necessarily continuous (namely, a new piece of data is not always available at each clock cycle of the recovered clock), a valid data signal 13 indicating when the data is valid is provided to the buffer.

[0003] The output end 14 of the buffer is coupled to a downstream digital device 15, which requires the generation of an output or read clock 16 that matches the effective data rate, but without gaps such as may be associated with times of the input clock for which there is no valid data. This allows data to be read out from the buffer at each clock cycle of the newly generated clock. This new clock and the data can then be successfully delivered to the next portion of the downstream digital transport path. Conventional approaches to solving this problem involve dividing a high-speed clock down to the necessary frequency, or the use of an external phase locked loop.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] The present invention obviates the need for a high speed clock or an external mechanism, by means of a clock regeneration scheme that employs a fixed fractional delay line coupled to receive the received clock signal that accompanies the data. The fixed fractional delay line has a plurality of output ports from which respective incrementally delayed versions of the received clock are produced. Namely, the delay line produces N clock signals having successive delays $(0/N)360$, $(1/N)360$, ..., $((N-1)/N)360$ degrees relative to its input clock.

[0005] These N clock signals are respectively coupled to N input ports of a multiplexer, from the output of which the regenerated clock signal is derived. The multiplexer output is further coupled to the readout clock port of the FIFO data buffer into and through which the data signal is clocked, in accordance with the received or input clock, and on the basis of a data valid signal that accompanies the data. The multiplexer is controlled by respective overflow/full and underflow/empty signals from the data buffer.

[0006] When the regenerated clock is running faster than the data valid signal, the underflow state of the buffer will cause the multiplexer to incrementally advance or step in a first, increased delay direction through the plurality of output ports of the delay line. This has the effect of lengthening a portion of one of the half-cycles of the

received or input clock signal, thereby slowing down the regenerated clock. On the other hand, when the regenerated clock is running slower than the data valid signal, the overflow state of the buffer will cause the multiplexer to incrementally step through the output ports of the delay line in a reverse direction. This has the effect of shortening a portion of one of the half-cycles of the received clock signal, thereby speeding up the regenerated clock.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] Figure 1 diagrammatically illustrates a conventional data buffer transport path for a digital communication receiver;

[0008] Figure 2 diagrammatically illustrates an embodiment of the fixed fractional delay line-based clock regeneration circuit of the present invention;

[0009] Figure 3 is a timing diagram showing the effect of lengthening a portion of a clock cycle of the received clock signal of the circuit of Figure 2, so as to slow down the regenerated clock; and

[00010] Figure 4 is a timing diagram showing the effect of shortening a portion of a clock cycle of the received clock signal of the circuit of Figure 2, so as to speed up the regenerated clock.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[00011] Before describing the fixed fractional delay line-based clock regeneration circuit in accordance with the present invention, it should be observed that the invention resides primarily in a modular arrangement of conventional digital communication circuits and components. In a practical implementation that facilitates their being packaged in a hardware-efficient equipment configuration, these modular arrangements may be readily implemented as field programmable gate array (FPGA), or application specific integrated circuit (ASIC) chip sets.

[00012] Consequently, the configuration of such arrangements of circuits and components and the manner in which they are interfaced with other telecommunication equipment have, for the most part, been illustrated in the drawings by a readily understandable block diagrams, and associated timing diagrams, which show only those specific details that are pertinent to the present invention, so as not to obscure the disclosure with details which will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art having the benefit of the description herein. The block diagram illustrations are primarily intended to show the major components of the clock recovery circuit of the invention in a convenient functional grouping, whereby the present invention may be more readily understood.

[00013] Attention is now directed to Figure 2, wherein an embodiment of the fixed fractional delay line-based clock

regeneration circuit of the present invention is diagrammatically shown as comprising a clock input port 21, to which a received or input clock signal CLKI at some frequency f_N is applied. Clock input port 21 is coupled to the clock input port of a FIFO data buffer 20 and to an input 31 of a fixed phase delay line 30, which has a plurality of output ports 32-1, 32-2, 32-3, ..., 32-N, from which respective incrementally delayed versions of the fixed clock frequency f_N are produced. Namely, delay line 30 is operative to produce N clock signals having successive delays $(0/N)360$, $(1/N)360$, ..., $((N-1)/N)360$ degrees relative to the input clock supplied to the clock input port 21.

[00014] These N clock signals are respectively coupled to N input ports 41-1, 41-2, 41-3, ..., 41-N of a multiplexer 40, an output port 42 of which produces the regenerated or output clock signal CLKO. The output port 42 is further coupled to a read out clock port 22 of the FIFO data buffer 20. Data buffer 20 further includes a data input port 23 to which the received data stream is coupled, as well as a Data Valid (or Chip Enable) port 24, the binary state of which indicates whether there is valid data at the data input port 23. The Data Valid bit will typically be valid at a rate that is less than the frequency of the input clock (e.g., on the order of 40-45 MHz for the data valid bit vs. an input clock rate of 50 MHz). The data buffer 20 further includes a data output port 25 from which the

output data stream is derived in accordance with the read out clock. Data buffer 20 further includes a pair of capacity status bits associated with the data storage availability of the buffer. A full bit port 26 is used to indicate a buffer overflow condition (i.e., that the buffer is full), while an empty bit port 27 is used to indicate a buffer underflow condition (i.e., that the buffer is empty). Namely, the capacity status bits indicate whether the regenerated clock CLKO is running faster or slower than the effective clock rate of the Data Valid bit.

[00015] As pointed out above, where the output clock CLKO is running faster than the effective rate of the data valid signal, the state of the empty bit will cause the multiplexer 30 to incrementally advance or step through the plurality of output ports 32-1, 32-2, ..., 32-N of the delay line 20. As will be described below with reference to the timing diagram of Figure 3, this has the effect of lengthening one of the half-cycles of the regenerated clock signal CLKO, thereby slowing down the regenerated clock. On the other hand, where the output clock CLKO is running slower than the effective rate of the data valid signal, the state of the full bit will cause the multiplexer 30 to incrementally reverse through the plurality of output ports 32-1, 32-2, ..., 32-N of the delay line 20. As will be described below with reference to the timing diagram of Figure 4, this has the effect of shortening one of the

half-cycles of the regenerated clock signal, thereby speeding up the regenerated clock.

[00016] More particularly, Figure 3 shows a non-limiting example of a set of three phase delayed versions of the input clock signal CLKI as produced at output ports 32-1, 32-2, ..., 32-N of the fraction delay line 30, where $N=4$. Since $N=4$, each successive version of the received or input clock signal CLKI is delayed by 90° relative to its immediately preceding version of the input clock signal. It will be assumed that the multiplexer is initially reset to couple its first input port 41-1 to its output port 42, and that the output clock CLKO is running faster than the effective rate of the data valid signal. This tends to drive the buffer to an underflow or empty condition. It will also be assumed that the clock signal adjustment occurs once for every three successive clock cycles. Since multiplexer 40 'points' to its input port 41-1, then at time t_0 , the rising edge of the output clock CLKO coincides with the rising edge of the input clock version having the phase delay $(0/N)360$.

[00017] At time t_1 , the empty bit port 27 of the data buffer produces an output associated with an underflow condition. For this state of the full bit port, multiplexer 40 responds by incrementing the connection of the output port 42 to the second input port 42-2. Since, at time t_1 , the high state of the input clock version having the phase delay $(1/N)360$ is the same as that (high) as the input

clock version having the phase delay $(0/N)360$, the state of the output clock is high and remains high for an additional period of time, to coincide with the clock version having phase delay $(1/N)360$, which transitions low at time t_2 . Namely, due to the incrementing of the fixed phase delayed versions of the fixed input clock, the output clock has been lengthened or has slipped by a fraction (here 90°) of the clock cycle of the input clock.

[00018] With the clock signal adjustment occurring once for every three successive clock cycles, then at time t_3 in the timing diagram of Figure 3, there is a further incremental advancing or stepping from the input clock version having the phase delay $(1/N)360$ to the next input clock version, namely, the input clock version having the phase delay $(2/N)360$. As shown therein, at time t_3 , the high state of the input clock version having the phase delay $(2/N)360$ is again the same as that (high) as the input clock version having the phase delay $(1/N)360$, so that the state of the output clock is high and remains high for an additional period of time, to coincide with the clock version having phase delay $(2/N)360$, which transitions low at time t_4 . Thus, due to the further incrementing of the fixed phase delayed versions of the input clock, the output clock CLKO is again lengthened or slipped by a 90° fraction of the clock cycle of the input clock. It will be appreciated that for the example shown in the timing diagram of Figure 3, such slipping or lengthening of the output clock

effectively reduces the frequency of the output clock CLK0 to $12/13$ of the frequency of the input clock.

[00019] The timing diagram of Figure 4 shows the same set of three phase delayed versions of the input clock signal CLKI as produced at output ports 32-1, 32-2, ..., 32-N of the fraction delay line 30, again with $N=4$. It will be assumed that the multiplexer 40 is initially pointing to input port 41-3, so that at time t_0 , the rising edge of the output clock CLK0 coincides with the rising edge of the input clock version having the phase delay $(2/N)360$.

[00020] At time t_1 , the overflow or full bit port 26 produces an output associated with an overflow condition. For this state of the overflow bit port, multiplexer 40 responds by decrementing the connection of the output port 42 to the second input port 42-2. Since, at time t_1 , the high state of the input clock version having the phase delay $(1/N)360$ is the same as that (high) as the input clock version having the phase delay $(2/N)360$, the state of the output clock is initially high, but then transitions low at time t_2 , to coincide with falling edge of the clock version having phase delay $(1/N)360$, which transitions low at time t_2 . Namely, due to the decrementing of the fixed phase delayed versions of the input clock, the output clock has been shortened or advanced by a fraction (here 90°) of the clock cycle of the input clock.

[00021] With the clock signal adjustment occurring once for every three successive clock cycles, then at time t_3 in the

timing diagram of Figure 4, there is a further decrementing from the input clock version having the phase delay $(1/N)360$ to the input clock version having the phase delay $(0/N)360$. Namely, due to the further decrementing of the fixed phase delayed versions of the input clock CLKI, the output clock CLKO has been shortened or advanced by a fraction (here 90°) of the clock cycle of the input clock. For the example shown in the timing diagram of Figure 4, advancing the output clock effectively increases the frequency of the output clock CLKO to $12/11$ of that of the input clock.

[00022] While we have shown and described an embodiment in accordance with the present invention, it is to be understood that the same is not limited thereto but is susceptible to numerous changes and modifications as known to a person skilled in the art, and we therefore do not wish to be limited to the details shown and described herein, but intend to cover all such changes and modifications as are obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art.